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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAELI PLANS FOR SILWAN AND THE HOLY BASIN

REF: A. 07 JERUSALEM 138
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 102
[1](#)C. JERUSALEM 292
[1](#)D. TEL AVIV 479

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: The Jerusalem Municipality has approved, but not yet made public, a town plan to facilitate Israeli development in the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem, according to Jerusalem lawyer Danny Seidemann. Seidemann also said that the GOI is quietly planning a large and well-funded development and restoration project in the Holy Basin around the Old City of Jerusalem. End Summary.

Consolidating Control Over Wadi Hilweh/Ir David

[¶](#)2. (C) According to Jerusalem lawyer Danny Seidemann, the Jerusalem Municipality has approved, but not yet made public, a town plan to facilitate Israeli development in the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem. Town Plan no. 11555 calls for pavement of roads, car parks, paths, promenades, open spaces, public institutions, and dense residential units in Wadi Hilweh, known to Israelis as Ir David (City of David). The town plan also calls for the confiscation of Palestinian land to create parking lots, the opening of a tunnel that will run from Wadi Hilweh/Ir David to the Jerusalem Archaeological Park and Davidson Center inside the Old City (REFS A and C), the demolition of 88 Palestinian homes in the adjacent al-Bustan neighborhood, and a cable car to the Mount of Olives.

[¶](#)3. (C) Since 1991, the Israeli settler group Elad has been allowed to control and develop Wadi Hilweh/Ir David without building permits or official GOI approvals (REF D). Some 7,500 Palestinians and roughly 350 Israeli settlers live in the area. Visitors to the Elad-run Ir David Visitors Center and National Park can travel from the Old City's Dung Gate to the Wadi Hilweh/Ir David ridge by way of the Siloam pools without leaving settler-controlled property or realizing that they have entered a predominately Palestinian East Jerusalem neighborhood. According to Ir David representative Aurital Bitton, by the end of 2008, the Ir David Visitors Center will have attracted over 400,000 tourists who come for the 3D movie, Segway tours, 4X4 ranger tours, and access to numerous key archaeological and historical sites.

A Well-Funded Historic Basin Project

[¶](#)4. (C) According to Seidemann, the GOI also plans a large development and restoration project in the Holy Basin around the Old City. Seidemann showed Poloff a government document corroborating his claims. The document, dated September 2008 and titled the "Project to Strengthen the Old City Basin and

the Mount of Olives," is an update by the Jerusalem Development Authority to PM Olmert's office. The document includes plans for contiguous parks surrounding the Old City, including in Mount Scopus, the Tsurim Valley, the Kidron Portal, the Kings Valley (North, Central and South), the Mount of Olives, the Ben Hinnom Valley and the Old City Wall perimeter; a Mount of Olives information center; an archaeological site and public sifting center in the Tsurim Valley; and connecting trails throughout the Holy Basin. Seidemann notes that the project is well-funded by Israeli cabinet resolution no. 4090 adopted on August 9, 2005, which allocated 50 million NIS (more than USD 14 million) for the project annually 2006-2013.

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